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LETTER DATED 13 JANUARY 1994 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF LEBANON TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to inform you that the Lebanese Government has decided to request the Security Council to extend the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which expires on 31 January 1994, for a further period of six months, on the basis of the provisions of Security Council resolutions 425 (1978), 426 (1978), 501 (1982), 508 (1982) and 509 (1982) and of all other relevant resolutions and decisions of the Security Council.

Since the last renewal of UNIFIL, the situation in Lebanon has continued to improve with the consolidation of national reconciliation. Law and order are established, bringing with them the return of normalcy. Most foreign diplomatic missions have reopened while citizens abroad and displaced persons are steadily returning to their homes and properties. Construction on downtown Beirut's new commercial centre has begun, along with projects to rebuild the national infrastructure, with emphasis on electricity, telecommunications, transportation, waterworks, schools and hospitals. Indications of growing national confidence are substantial increases in the deposits of Lebanese banks, reductions in the trade deficit, and a 7 per cent increase in the gross national product (GNP). A further sign of growing confidence is the ability the Lebanese have demonstrated in funding projects themselves in advance of target dates. There is a boom in construction and the country is witnessing the renaissance of its cultural, artistic, touristic, and educational institutions.

My Government is further pleased to report that the Lebanese Army and UNIFIL continue to coordinate in perfect harmony towards the end of deploying the Lebanese Army throughout the south of the country up to the internationally recognized boundaries.

However, in spite of these positive developments, the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, while wreaking havoc, continues to thwart and preclude Lebanon's complete recovery. Furthermore, Israel continues to perpetuate this occupation at a time when the whole region is geared to the Middle East peace process commenced in Madrid. Instead of seeking to implement confidence-building measures such as the release of hundreds of innocent Lebanese civilians held at the notorious Al-Khiam Detention Centre in violation

of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, the Israeli military continues its daily bombardments of Lebanon by land, sea or air, and incursions into Lebanon with additional armaments and artillery for the purpose of perpetuating the occupation.

The daily violence in southern Lebanon is the result of the continued Israeli occupation, which is the root of all problems between the two countries. As long as the occupation is allowed to continue, hostilities and bloodshed on Lebanese national soil will persist. Rather than succumb to the occupation of their land by force, the people of Lebanon, as sanctioned by the Charter of the United Nations, exercise their legal right of individual and collective resistance until Israel withdraws its forces from all Lebanese territory.

At the time of the last renewal of the UNIFIL mandate, the south came under heavy bombardment when scores of villages were levelled, thousands of homes destroyed, 150 civilians killed and 500,000 civilians forced to flee their homes. The Israeli Government called the invasion "Operation Accountability", the declared objective of which was the displacement of the civilian population and the flooding of Beirut with refugees. According to UNIFIL, the entire UNIFIL area of operation came under bombardment: immense damage was done to UNIFIL property and six UNIFIL soldiers sustained injuries. More recently, Israel's bombardment of UNIFIL positions led to the death of a Norwegian soldier and the wounding of several others, proving once again the aggressor's complete disregard for Lebanese sovereignty and the lives and mission of UNIFIL troops.

In spite of this, Lebanon remains wholly committed to the Middle East peace process and will continue in the bilateral negotiations in order to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on all relevant Security Council resolutions, and in particular resolution 425 (1978). Lebanon agreed to participate in the Madrid Conference and the subsequent rounds of negotiations in Washington on the basis of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). This was confirmed by the letter of assurances dated 18 October 1991 from the Government of the United States, as co-sponsor of the Conference, to the Government of Lebanon. It was Lebanon's clear understanding that the Middle East peace process would provide the framework in which Israel would implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

None the less, in view of the threat Israel's continued intransigence poses to this process, it remains incumbent upon the Security Council to demonstrate the inviolability of its resolutions. No Member State is above the law and the Council must take action to guarantee the prompt and long-overdue implementation of resolution 425 (1978) and the galvanization of its mechanism set out in resolution 426 (1978). This will enable the Lebanese Government to establish a bona fide peace by extending its authority over the entire south of the country up to its internationally recognized boundaries.

In this context, UNIFIL represents a valuable international commitment to the restoration of Lebanese sovereignty to the occupied south. Its much-needed support and humanitarian assistance perform a vital role in the daily life of the civilian population. However, this assistance cannot be a substitute for the fulfilment of UNIFIL's original mandate as stipulated in Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which is to ensure the withdrawal of Israeli forces from

Lebanon and to assist the Government of Lebanon in re-establishing its legitimate and effective authority in the area, through its Army and internal security forces.

The Lebanese Government takes this opportunity to pay tribute to the UNIFIL command, troops and administrators and to the troop contributing countries for their efforts and sacrifices in serving the cause of peace. It expresses deep appreciation for the tireless endeavours of the Secretary-General and his assistants, which contribute to the valuable presence of UNIFIL in southern Lebanon.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Khalil MAKKAWI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative